

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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R 291220Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2259

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 KHARTOUM 2243

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINS, SU

SUBJECT: ASSESSMENT OF NIMEIRI REGIME

REF: KHARTOUM 1988, STATE 178934

SUMMARY: ADDITIONAL INFO AVAILABLE SINCE SUBMISSION KHARTOUM REFTEL SERVES TO MODIFY POINTS OF DETAIL THEREIN BUT DOES NOT ALTER OUR FUNDAMENTAL FINDINGS THAT (A) ABORTIVE COUP REPRESENTED ESSENTIALLY OUTSIDE INTERVENTION; AND (B) REGIME'S ADMITTEDLY NARROW BASE REMAINS EFFECTIVE. FOR ANY WHO MAY HAVE FELT THAT NIMEIRI, THROUGH SSU AND OTHERWISE, WAS CONSTRUCTING A BROADLY-BASED POPULAR REGIME, THIS HAS BEEN A TIME OF DISILLUSIONMENT. BUT FOR THOSE WHO WONDERED ABOUT THE ARMY'S CONTINUING LOYALTY, IT HAS BEEN ONE OF REASSURANCE. WHILE RISK ASSASSINATION OR NEW COUP ATTEMPT CAN NEVER BE EXCLUDED, DEFEAT THIS LATEST THREAT REFLECTS UNDERLYING STRENGTH NIMEIRI REGIME RATHER THAN THE CONTRARY. END SUMMARY

1. INTRODUCTION: PASSAGE OF TIME SINCE ABORTIVE COUP HAS SERVED CONFIRM PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT KHARTOUM REFTEL. THIS MESSAGE ANALYZES RELEVANT FACTORS IN EFFORT MAKE CLEAR WHY COUNTRY TEAM DOES NOT BELIEVE EVENTS HAVE MODIFIED NIMEIRI'S ABILITY CONTINUE GOVERN AS EFFECTIVELY AS IN PAST.

2. EXTENT REBEL SUPPORT: EARLY GOS LINE RE "MERCENARY INVASION" WAS HIGHLY COLORED IF BY THIS WAS MEANT REGULAR MILITARY-TYPE OPERATION MOUNTED FROM LIBYA BY NON-SUDANESE.

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MAJORITY OF REBEL FORCE WAS SUDANESE BUT FOLLOWING

CONSIDERATIONS MAE CLEAR IT ENTERED SUDAN PIECEMEAL FROM ABROAD ON OPERATION WHICH COULD NOT HAVE BEEN MOUNTED WITHOUT MAJOR OUTSIDE SUPPORT: (A) SOPHISTICATED EQUIPMENT REBELS USED COULD NOT HAVE BEEN EMPLOYED WITHOUT EXTENSIVE PRIOR TRAINING WHICH WOULD HAVE HAD TO OCCUR ABROAD TO AVOID DISCOVERY; (B) MANY REBELS WHOM WE AND OTHER FOREIGN OBSERVERS ENCOUNTERED SPOKE DIALECT ARABIC UNFAMILIAR KHARTOUM; (C) WHILE OPERATION SKILFULLY PLANNED, EXECUTION FELL SHORT ON NUMBER POINTS, NOTABLY IDENTITY KEY SUDANESE MURDERED AT OUTSET (THERE WERE HALF-DOZEN CASES OF MISTAKEN IDENTITY); (D) REBEL UNITS IN SOME CASES APPEARED UNFAMILIAR WITH SURROUNDINGS AND UNCERTAIN WHAT TO DO; AND (E) TOTAL ABSENCE OF OBSERVABLE INDIGENOUS SUPPORT FOR REBELS AFTER COUP COMMENCED.

3. THERE IS ONE EXPLANATION WHICH, WHILE CONFIRMING SUDANESE CHARACTER OF REBEL FORCE, NEVERTHELESS MAKES CLEAR IT WAS, IN EFFECT, INVASION FROM OUTSIDE. THAT IS THE VIRTUAL CERTAINTY THAT CORE OF REBEL UNIT WAS DRAWN FROM 6000-ODD EXILES OF FANATIC ANSAR SECT WHO SOUGHT REFUGE IN METEMMA AREA OF ETHIOPIA AFTER NIMEIRI REGIME BRUTALLY SUBDUED ANSAR'S ABA ISLAND STRONGHOLD IN 1970 AND KILLED LAST IMAM. ANSAR SECT HAS ALWAYS BEEN STRONGEST AMONG UNLETTERED TRIBESMEN OF WESTERN SUDAN AND WE ASSUME MOST OF METEMMA EXILES WERE FROM THIS STRATUM OF POPULATION. CONSIDERABLE NUMBER ARE NO LONGER THERE, MANY REPORTEDLY HAVING BEEN ATTRACTED TO RICH LIBYA BY PROMISE OF EMPLOYMENT. ONCE THERE, IT WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN HARD TO ORGANIZE, TRAIN AND INFILTRATE THEM BACK INTO KHARTOUM AREA OVER PAST YEAR. ARMS, AMMO AND SPECIAL EQUIPMENT WERE PROVIDED AT LAST MINUTE FROM SECRET CACHES SIMILARLY BUILT UP OVER TIME PLUS FINAL CONVOY FROM JEBEL UWAYNAT WITH HEAVY WEAPONS.

4. LACK OF INDIGENOUS SUPPORT IS MADE FURTHER EVIDENT BY, AMONG OTHER THINGS, REPORT THAT RADIO OMDURMAN TECHNICIANS, ARRIVING FOR WORK JULY 2 AND FINDING STATION ALREADY IN REBEL HANDS, WENT INTO HIDING RATHER THAN COOPERATING TO GET STATION ON AIR. ADDITIONALLY, EXTENSIVE TRAINING IN LIBYAN CASES, INCLUDING EVEN PRACTICE TARGETTING FOR REBEL ANTI-AIRCRAFT CREWS AT KUFRA WITH LIBYAN MIGS (TDFIRDB-3-5/07278-76), WOULD HARDLY HAVE BEEN NECESSARY HAD THERE BEEN SIGNIFICANT SECRET

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DOMESTIC SUPPORT WITHIN SUDAN.

5. THE "SUDANESE FACTOR": ASSUMPTION IN STATE REFTTEL THAT REBELS "UST HAVE RECRUITED SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF SYMPATHIZERS WITHIN SUDAN" THUS APPEARS WIDE OF MARK. IN FACT, CONTRARY ALMOST CERTAINLY THE CASE, SINCE ADMITTEDLY SLOPPY GOS INTELLIGENCE WORK DID LEARN OF PLOTTING JUNE 30 ANYWAY AND WOULD HARDLY HAVE BEEN CAUGHT THAT FLAT-FOOTED HAD

MOVEMENT HAD LARGE NUMBER LOCAL SYMPATHIZERS. IN ANALYZING LOCAL EVENTS, DUE ACCOUNT MUST ALWAYS BE TAKEN OF THE "SUDANESE FACTOR", UNDER WHICH A CERTAIN FECKLESSNESS AND INATTENTION IS NORMAL HALLMARK OF GOS OPERATIONS. NO COUP THREAT OF TYPE MOUNTED WAS EVER CONCEIVED; SO NO PRECAUTIONS WERE TAKEN AGAINST IT, KEY SUDANESE UNITS WERE BLITHELY STATIONED ABROAD, DENUDING KHARTOUM OF COUNTER-FORCE CAPABILITY, AND REGIME EVEN TOOK STEPS ON JULY 1 TO NEUTRALIZE LOCAL UNITS' POTENTIAL ON THEORY THAT ANY COUP THREAT MUST BY DEFINITION ORIGINATE FROM MILITARY.

6. OUTLOOK: NET RESULT ABORTIVE COUP HAS BEEN TO MAKE NIMEIRI REGIME LOOK SLOPPY AND OVER-CONFIDENT, BUT LIKELIHOOD SOME FURTHER COUP ATTEMPT IN NEAR FUTURE SEEMS REMOTE. ANSAR ARE

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FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
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S E C R E T FINAL SECTION OF 2 KHARTOUM 2243

EXDIS

LICKING THEIR WOUNDS WHILE REBEL BRUTALITIES HAVE SERVED REMIND LESS WARLIKE PEOPLE OF THE NILE OF WESTERNERS' FEROCIOUS PROCLIVITIES. NUMBER LEADING FORMER SUPPORTERS OF SADIQ AL-MAHDI HAVE PUBLICLY CONDEMNED HIM AND THE OPERATION. LOCAL MAHDIST LEADER, AHMAD AL-MAHDI, ALREADY RELEASED FROM SHORT DETENTION, LOYAL MAHDIST FAMILY SUBSIDIES REPORTEDLY RESTORED AND REGIME PROPAGANDA SHREWDLY SEEKING DRAW DISTINCTION BETWEEN BULK PUTATIVELY LOYAL SUDANESE AND ANSAR CITIZENS SADIQ'S "MAD HENCHMEN". RELIGIOUS LEADERS KHATMIJYAH SECT, WHOSE POLITICAL ARM WAS NUP, HAVE REMAINED LOYAL. SUDAN COMMUNIST PARTY REMAINS TOUGH ORGANIZATION IN BEING BUT LACKS NUMBERS OR, WE THINK, MUCH MILITARY SUPPORT. MOSLEM BROTHERHOOD, WHICH ALSO HAS BITTERLY OPPOSED NIMEIRI, SEEMS TO HAVE TAKEN

NO ORGANIZED PART IN COUP ATTEMPT, THOUGH SOME OF ITS MEMBERS NO DOUBT DID INDIVIDUALLY (E.G. AT AIRPORT AND TELEPHONE EXCHANGE). BUT STUDENTS KHARTOUM UNIVERSITY, WHERE BROTHERHOOD STRONGEST, TOOK NO ORGANIZED PART IN UPRISING, INDICATING REGIME'S EFFORTS NEUTRALIZE ANTI-NIMEIRI STUDENT LEADERSHIP MAY HAVE HAD SOME SUCCESS. MOREOVER, WE HAVE REPORT THAT BROTHERHOOD LEADER HASSAN TURABI (WHO LANGUISHING IN JAIL HERE) SOMEHOW WAS CONTACTED BY SADIQ RE COUP IN ADVANCE AND REPLIED THAT BROTHERHOOD DID NOT APPROVE OF CONTEMPLATED "INVASION" BUT HOPED FOR MOVEMENT FROM WITHIN ARMY. ACCORDINGLY, MAIN ANTI-REGIME ELEMENTS APPEAR FOR PRESENT EITHER WOUNDED, WEAK OR WARY.

7. SSU CADRES: SSU PERFORMANCE DURING FIGHTING WAS TOTAL LOSS, REVEALING (WHAT MOST OBSERVERS HAD LONG KNOWN) THAT
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THIS SINGLE-PARTY VENTURE HAS FAILED BROADEN BASE OF REGIME'S POPULARITY. CHANGES MAY BE EXPECTED IN THIS QUARTER, BUT THEY ARE LIKELY TO PROVE EQUALLY INEFFECTIVE.

8. ARMY'S ATTITUDE CRUCIAL: KEY MESSAGE OF RECENT EVENTS IS THAT SUDANESE MILITARY REMAIN PREPARED TO UNITE BEHIND NIMEIRI IN RESISTING COUP ATTEMPT FROM OUTSIDE THEIR RANKS. MOST OFFICERS ARE BELIEVED TO HAVE LITTLE LOVE FOR BRUTAL ANSAR AND FEUDAL PAST THEY REPRESENT, PARTICULARLY VIEW NUMBER SENIOR OFFICERS KILLED IN FIGHTING. ON POSITIVE SIDE, ENTIRE ARMED FORCES PLUS POLICE AND PRISON GUARDS ARE SCHEDULED RECEIVE PREVIOUSLY ANNOUNCED 38-45 PERCENT PAY HIKE BEGINNING END JULY, AND PENSIONS OF RETIRED PERSONNEL ABOUT TO BE CORRESPONDINGLY RAISED. EFFORTS ALSO ALREADY UNDERWAY PROCURE MORE MODERN EQUIPMENT AND AUGMENT ARMY'S ABILITY FULFILL ITS PRIMARY DEFENSE MISSION. IN ADDITION, NIMEIRI AND SOME OF HIS INNER CIRCLE OF EX-ARMY OFFICERS RETAIN CLOSE CONTACTS AMONG MILITARY. IN LIGHT THESE ATTITUDES AND PRECAUTIONS, NO REASON WHY JULY 2-3 EVENTS SHOULD WEAKEN NIMEIRI'S SUPPORT IN THIS QUARTER. REGIME IN ANY CASE CONTINUES PAY CLOSEST ATTENTION TO, AND DEAL WITH, ANY THREAT OF DISSIDENCE FROM MILITARY, THUS REDUCING (THOUGH NOT ELIMINATING) POSSIBILITY ANY COUP ATTEMPT FROM THIS QUARTER.

9. EGYPTIAN ATTITUDE (STATE REFTEL): FAHMY'S COMMENTS (CAIRO 9112) SEEM SO EXAGGERATED AS TO BE MISLEADING. HIS OBSERVATION THAT "CRISIS OF CONFIDENCE DEVELOPED (HERE JULY 2) AMONG ARMY, GOVERNMENT AND POLICE" SUGGESTS SUPERFICIAL READING OF EVENTS TAKING INSUFFICIENT ACCOUNT OF FACTORS (LISTED PARA 3 KHARTOUM REFTEL) WHICH ADEQUATELY EXPLAIN ARMY'S EVIDENT INITIAL LETHARGY. FAR FROM BEING "CRAZY AND ERRATIC", NIMEIRI HAS PRAGMATICALLY PRESIDED OVER HUGE AND HETEROGENEOUS SUDAN LONGER THAN ANY RULER SINCE

INDEPENDENCE. FAHMY'S COMMENTS WOULD APPEAR TO REFLECT PERENNIAL EGYPTIAN TENDENCY EITHER TO IGNORE OR PATRONIZE SUDANESE UNTIL CRISIS OCCURS WHEN THEY THEN OVER-REACT OUT OF SURPRISE AND CONCERN (AND, WE SUSPECT, CALCULATED DESIRE TO AGUMENT FLOW OF AID FROM USG). FAHMY'S STRAINED ATTEMPT IMPUTE SOVIET SUPPORT TO FEUDAL REBEL MOVEMENT WOULD APPEAR FALL IN THIS CATEGORY AS DOES HIS WIDLY ERRONEOUS COMMENT THAT USG HAS ALWAYS SUPPORTED
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MAHDISTS. ARAB-SPEAKING SOVEIT AND EAST GERMAN OFFICERS WERE INDEED ON STREETS DURING CRISIS, SINCE THEY HAD NO OTHER MEANS OF FINDING OUT WHAT WAS GOING ON. IT WOULD APPEAR FROM HERE THAT EGYPTIANS (AND, WE SUSPECT, SAUDIS) HAVE BEEN POOR-MOUTHING NIMEIRI SINCE COUP ATTEMPT LARGELY FOR THEIR OWN -- BUT OPPOSITE -- REASONS: IMPECUNIOUS EGYPTIANS TO GENERATE MORE HELP FROM ELSEWHERE IN SECURING COUNTRY'S SOUTHERN FLANK, WHILE WEALTHY SAUDIS USE SAME ARGUMENTS TO EXCUSE SAG RELUCTANCE TO SIGN BLANK CHECK.

10. CONCLUSION: FROM ABOVE ANALYSIS VARIOUS POWER SOURCES IN SUDAN, COUNTRY TEAM CONCLUDES THAT, WHILE COUP ATTEMPT CERTAINLY EMBARRASSED REGIME AND MAY HAVE STRIPPED NIMEIRI OF AURA OF CONSIDERABLE POPULAR SUPPORT WHICH SOME MAY HAVE ASSUMED HE HAD, IT ALSO CONFIRMED ARMY'S WILLINGNESS FIGHT TO SUPPORT HIM AND RELUCTANCE MOST OTHER ELEMENTS IN POPULATION TO GET INVOLVED. SUCH APATHY OBVIOUSLY IS NO RINGING ENDORSEMENT OF REGIME BUT IT IS IMPORTANT FACTOR IN BUTTRESSING THE "INS" RATHER THAN THE "OUTS". CATS PROVERBIALY HAVE NINE LIVES AND THIS WAS ONLY NIMEIRI'S FIFTH. BREWER

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